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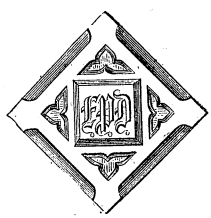
MASSACHUSETTS A FIELD FOR CHURCH MISSIONS.

A SERMON PREACHED IN BOSTON BEFORE THE "DIOCESAN BOARD OF MISSIONS," MAY 20, 1863,

BY THE
REV. F. D. HUNTINGTON, D. D.



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1863.

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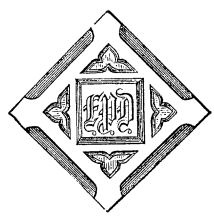

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DEDHAM, June 3, 1863.

REV. AND DEAR SIR, — At a meeting of the Diocesan Board of Missions, held at the house of the Rt. Rev. Bishop, on the 1st inst., it was voted unanimously:

"That the thanks of the Board be presented to yourself for the sermon you preached, at their request, during the Session of the Diocesan Convention, and that a copy of the same be asked of you for publication."

Yours very truly,

SAMUEL B. BABCOCK,
Secretary B. of M.

To the REV. F. D. HUNTINGTON, D. D.

RIVERSIDE, CAMBRIDGE:
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MASSACHUSETTS

A FIELD FOR CHURCH MISSIONS.

"For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad." — 1 THESS. i. 8.

THE special value of the words is that they give us a certain sense of energy of movement in missionary action. Whether we take this *sounding out* of the Word of the Lord as the express and voluntary proclamation of the Gospel to their neighbors by the Christians at Thessalonica, as some expositors do, or, with others, construe the phrase as referring to the honorable report that had gone abroad of the faithfulness of the men of this young church in their home-work, its fitness for our purpose to-night will be the same. The power of the faith then was such a vital and irrepressible thing that it would not stay in its entrenchments, would not hold its peace, or be hid. The life of their love for Christ is too intense, and too thoroughly charged with the law of increase, to let these believers nestle down satisfied with their own church privileges and accommodations, setting their candlestick so

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low that the candle will throw its beams only a few stadia along the Thermaic Gulf, and limiting their Christian influence to the city where they get their living. If they do not take pains to publish their zeal for the Cross, it will publish itself, in their self-denial, consistency, and activity. From them as a starting-point, through all that Macedonian and Achaian region, the Word of the Lord must go sounding out, and sounding on, ringing and reverberating along the waking Pagan populations, like the voice of a trumpet, — quickening, converting, gathering in, by group after group, the great and glad *ecclesia*, — rank after rank and army after army rallying to the "sacramental host." The term itself that the apostle uses, — used here alone in the whole New Testament, — answers well to the other word in his vivid Greek speech, which he chooses to signify the work of preaching, — κηρυξας, — a word taken from the animating office of the herald, who stood, in the Greek games, at the end of the race-course, to stir the spirits of the runners, to hold up the prize, and to proclaim the name of the victor. So, according to St. Paul and his Thessalonian disciples, the preacher's errand is the exhilarating one of declaring to men the prize of their high calling; the Word of the Lord is a message of *life* and *power;* and the first business of a Christian Church, anywhere, is to *sound out*, "in every place," its "faith to God-ward," and to "spread it abroad."

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That law of the Church's life is as unalterable as its Head; and no Church is apostolical that does not mind it. Literally it remains a *law*, — an inevitable condition and mode of its being as the thing which its name signifies, — as a Church of Christ, "yesterday, to-day, and forever." Wherever this law begins to be suspended, or forgotten, there, and that moment, the Body has begun to part with its red blood, and to forfeit its title. The *figure* may stand, and, with languid functions, keep up the semblances of vitality, — as is seen in that malady of a decaying vital stream, which the physicians call *anæmia;* but the force slackens, the fibre whitens, and the seats of life are struck, along with the organs. A Church that is not constantly adding to its possessions, and enlarging its domain, by the earnestness of the souls already organized within it, however affluent, comfortable, and punctilious, is a backslider, and has a curse preparing. Not to grow is to die. Not to "spread abroad," is to wither away. Napoleon's maxim is no more true of the *State* militant than of the *Church* militant. "The army that remains in its entrenchments is beaten." It is the *live* Body, — so penetrated with Christ that it can say of itself every hour, "It is no more I that live, but Christ liveth in me," which has no time for internal controversy, and no strength to waste in schism, and is only stimulated to fresh enterprises by unbelieving Jews or Gentiles around it; always, from St. Paul's day

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to this day, — everywhere, in Macedonia, in Massachusetts, and round the world, — so *receiving* the Word in "much affliction," and yet "with joy of the Holy Ghost," as to "sound it forth" again, in such ready and cheerful responses of missionary effort, offerings, and prayers, as cannot be kept back.

As to the question, therefore, whether this extension of the Gospel and Church of Christ in our own territory is an obligation resting upon us, in conscience and heart, as an appointment of God, — the means of arriving at an answer to that would seem to be simple and near at hand. In the first place, our religion teaches us that the Christian salvation of any one human soul, anywhere in the world, is a result of such moment in God's sight, that if everything we could do and give would secure to only that one human soul the blessing of eternal life, a holy character here, and an everlasting spiritual activity and joy in the world to come, with all the benefits that follow from that one living power, the labor and the gift would be more than justified. If we have ever learned the love of our Lord truly, we shall know that all the wonders, the toils, the teachings, the sufferings of his ministry, from the flight into Egypt to the ascension into heaven, would have been accomplished just as readily for the weakest or wickedest heart in all this world, as for the earth itself and its millions. Again, in direct language, and repeatedly, Christ

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makes it the business of his followers to multiply their number by conversion. No sooner are converts made, than they are sent forth, two by two, or one by one, to convert their neighbors; and every soul, of every nation, is a neighbor. As surely as the real spirit of the faith is received, the desire to communicate it will come with it. Two things, the Lord says, are utterly irreconcilable, — to be a Christian, and not to be in earnest in making others Christians. So that while he was on earth, and at the moment of his final separation from them, he was bidding his disciples go, be missionaries, preach and teach, found Churches, and set up ordinances; and those that could not go were to furnish support and a Godspeed for those that could. "How shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent." Further, the moment Christianity began to act and to be a felt force in human history, it acted as a self-diffusive, communicative creature, and was felt as a missionary force. All the New Testament, from the Evangelists onwards, proves that. The "Acts" of the Apostles were aggressive, forthgoing acts. Their writings were sent as epistles to newly established churches, mostly from temporary missionary stations in their travels. Whatever permanent institutions were set up and left behind, the messengers were still flying on from one advanced post to another, bearing a Gospel portable and perambulatory, as well as constructive and binding; gathering with one hand,

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organizing with the other; and in this way, under the same self-imparting law of charity, the cause has made its way thus far over the earth. Is it for us to stop its advancement? Besides, the special favor of the Heavenly Providence has always accompanied these enterprises. Nowhere have the signals of the presence of the Holy Spirit been so clear as on the fields of this sort of activity. Nowhere has religion itself been so pure in doctrine, or so Christlike in conduct. So that the handwriting of the original commission has had its copy, all along, in the actual effects it has unfolded. More than all, the stamp of Divine authority has been seen on this appointment, in the reactive influence it has graciously shed back on the Christian bodies that have been most prompt and energetic in it. Many a parish, many a whole community, has been waked up from spiritual death by beginning to give and work for missions. There is no gauge so certain for determining the religious prosperity of any local Church. Would you learn how a parish stands *actually*, stands before the Master, you will inquire not after the aggregate of its investments, the rate of its pew-rents, the costliness or convenience of its buildings, or even the number of its attendants, so much as after the amount of its cordial contributions to the furtherance of the Gospel in destitute regions, and the universality with which this habit of personal giving is followed up by the men, the women, and the children of the flock.

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God sets the manifest tokens of his blessing on every people that, having freely received, as freely gives. We have, then, these five proofs of the position that missionary liberality has the substantive and holy character of a Divine appointment; and no individual Christian is exempted from that charitable commandment.

Let us bring this doctrine, then, where this occasion invites it, directly into this Diocese. What I shall undertake will be to show, first, *that this part of New England is a missionary field, and what makes it so:* and secondly, that *the Church to which we belong has in its doctrine, worship, and discipline some special advantages and adaptations for occupying it, and honoring Christ in it.* If these two truths can be seen and acknowledged, then the question whether we shall, this night and henceforth, redouble our resolution, our action, and our sacrifices, in this special behalf, will be practically resolved into the more primary question, whether we are ourselves believers in what we profess to believe, or not.

A missionary field may be said to exist, in a Christian country, wherever considerable portions of the population are, for any cause, not reached by the Gospel. An additional fitness will be found in the application of that term if large portions of the people are thus lying outside the Gospel's reach because they are disinclined to let it reach them. Without going to statistical statements, which are

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at hand, but which require a great many qualifications to render them of any fair use in the argument, — it is enough simply to direct attention to facts that are before everybody's eyes. Taking city and country together, if all the houses of worship in Massachusetts, of all the religious bodies, were literally and completely filled each Sunday, probably about half the adult persons in the Commonwealth would be gathered in. Making allowance for the room that is regularly unoccupied, it will be safe to say that not far from one third of the souls in the State are, on an average, within the weekly sound of some kind of public religious instruction and prayer. Suppose that an average of one third of the whole are required by sickness, the care of the sick, domestic and other necessities, to be absent. There will remain the other third, absent, not from necessity, but from indifference or from choice. Within a week, I have learned, on good authority, of one of the larger towns of the Commonwealth, not specially modern, or of sudden growth, and not including any disproportionate share of foreigners, but steady, prosperous, inland, and in all respects a fair example of our best townships, that while the population has trebled, within a given term of years, the accommodations in Protestant sanctuaries have not increased at all, while there is still vacant space in the sanctuaries existing. In another rural town that happens to be well known to me, not in any way peculiar as to situa-

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tion or history, in the heart of the State, out of about two thousand inhabitants not more than four hundred, under the most favorable conditions, are collected on Sunday.

Worse yet, however, is the aspect of the case, when we look at some particular classes. Of young men, for instance, between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five, much more than the natural proportion will fall among the non-attendants. It would be difficult, perhaps, to tell where they are in the hours of service; but they are not within the walls of any sacred house. And yet, as a class, they are certainly not second to any other in importance to the moral welfare of the country. How few of these young men, when they pass out from under parental restraint and act on their own choice, frequent any holy place! So in our cities, where both individuals and families are less amenable to neighborly observation, and are cast more aloof from the traditional sentiment which still attaches social respectability to the outward recognition of religious ordinances, there are entire streets from which only a few stragglers make their way to any temple. Allow, now, whatever margin you will for mistake in particular estimates. There will remain an amount of indisputable fact as to the extent of our non-worshipping population, equally discreditable to our Christian reputation, inconsistent with the beginnings and professions of our New England history, and ominous of an appalling future.

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How, then, is it to be accounted for? Undoubtedly, in the first place, we must refer it, in considerable part, to that inborn and inbred repugnance of the natural man to the spiritualities of our Christian faith, which receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God because they are spiritually discerned. Unquestionably, we have the clew to very much of it in the first half of our Ninth Article. A life which is lived on the level of the senses, and breathes only the air of this world, which has self-will for its secret law, and self-love for its root and core, whose own nature is inclined to evil, whose only aspiration is a greediness for physical pleasure, or admiration, or social position, or sheer money, or professional success and display, will instinctively shrink from every earnest voice in which Christ makes his messengers speak. The man that is "very far gone from original righteousness" will keep as far as he can, *i. e.*, as far as his selfish objects will allow him, from the spot where true righteousness, with its sober fellows, "temperance and judgment to come," is preached. Before he has begun to long for his Father's house on high by inward penitence, his sense of alienation, his half-suppressed consciousness of guilt, his anxious apprehension of rebuke, and the uneasy conviction that he deserves it, will draw him anywhere else rather than to the Father's house on earth. He stumbles at the offence of the Cross. It is this frightful, ever-prevalent, hereditary aversion, the wicked

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working and fatal success of the adversary, which has made John Foster, and many believers besides him, despair of any considerable triumph of the Kingdom till the coming of a new Dispensation. All the more will every earnest witness-bearer within the Fold, having tasted of the great salvation, find in this very estrangement and prodigality the supreme motive to carry out and press upon the lost and dying multitudes the unsearchable riches of Christ. All the more will the heart of the Church be penetrated in every fibre, and stirred to its centre, and haunted even in its sleep and dreams, by the Macedonian cry. All the more will every one of its ambassadors, feeling the Passion of the Redeemer as the power of his ministry, say, day and night, between the porch and the altar, Woe is unto me if I preach not this blessed, saving, glorious Gospel, sounding out the word, and spreading the faith.

From this general and constant cause let us pass to see if there are not some that are more specific and differential.

One such may be discovered, it seems to me, in a tendency, peculiarly prevalent in this part of Christendom, and fostered under the habits of a New England education, to exaggerate the importance of the human part of the business of the sanctuary, in comparison with the divine. There can be no risk of truth in saying that of those who do attend religious services, a large majority are

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directed and attracted more by the personal qualities of the preacher than by the honor of God the Father, loyalty to God the Son, or faith in God the Holy Ghost. Listen to the comments at the door, as the congregation come out; lay your ear to the domestic discussions on the question of going at all, before they go in; hear what the children in the families hear to form their life-long judgments; watch the manners of the assembly while the tedious worship of the Most High hinders the progress to the entertaining effort of the man; open the records of pulpit vicissitude and pulpit discontent, and you cannot escape the painful conviction that these questions, "Who that *man* is, how eloquent, how interesting, how much admired or how popular elsewhere he is, or is not, and how he compares with another," are questions which crowd aside the weightier matters, the penitent confession of sin, the renewal of the promises and covenants of redemptive grace, the sacrifices of praise, the searchings of conscience, the quickening and guiding of the soul's life, the edification of the body, with those deeper questions, — What have I yet to do to be saved, and how shall this holy place and its offices help me to that salvation? It is not so much that the sermon is overesteemed, for it still pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe; but it is that in the sermon itself is sought, expected, *demanded*, — not chiefly that which the Bible and the Holy Ghost put there — not the simple and

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faithful opening of the Word — not that manifestation of the Cross which is "the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation" — not the unction and plainness which apply Gospel truth *through the heart* to the daily living and suffering and godly walking of men and families, — but rather elements which nature and culture and temperament have lodged in the body and the brain of the man by whom the sermon comes.

But why, it will be asked, should this false emphasis upon the unevangelical elements of the service drive away the bulk of the people, whose Christian principles are not settled and their spiritual tastes not formed? First, because it sets up a standard which can never be practically met. Christ, the Shepherd-King, never promised to send, never meant to send, ambassadors who, as a body, should be ministers to this secular and superficial excitement, and providers of a literary or oratorical entertainment. He sends, for his spiritual priesthood, pastors, teachers, and preachers, in their intellectual furnishing neither much above nor much below the average educated mind of the people. The first two chapters of the first epistle to the Corinthians, and the natural powers of His original apostles, have settled that forever, — "in demonstration of the Spirit." Taught to look for performances uniformly above that mark, in a ministry called with another calling, and hard worked in holy and charitable functions besides, men are

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trained into a vicious temper of criticism, and are almost perpetually disappointed. Now, intelligent mechanics and men of business, in one or another of the cheap publications of the day, or on one or another of the platforms of oratory, can read every week, or hear very often, the best thoughts of the time, vigorously and eloquently expressed, by the highest masters of thinking and style, in every department of literature and science. If that, then, is what the layman is seeking, why should he go to church? If he does go seeking that, nineteen times out of twenty, in the nature of things, he will not get what he seeks. What wonder if he stops going altogether? Those other wants and capacities in him, which his Maker planted there as germs of a higher life, to give him alliance with saints, heirship in an eternal kingdom, and "conversation" in that heavenly city, have never been waked up in him by the religious teachers he has had, and so church-starvation has dwarfed and distorted him. But, secondly, this fearful forgetfulness of the richer spiritual, devotional, and sacramental uses of the Lord's House, does its mischief more effectually yet, by creating false tests and an unhealthy appetite, even in professedly Christian persons of the community. No small part of the tremendous sin lies at their door. And if the little Israel itself goes after idols, what will happen but that Baal and Ashtaroth should prosper — Pantheism and beer-shops, wanderers in the fields and

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loungers at home, faithless philanthropists, and wizards that peep and mutter?

Corresponding to this misconception of the preacher's office on the part of the people at large, is a misconception on his own. Unquestionably, we must all take our share of the multiform and complicated mistake. Too much pulpit abstraction; too persistent an adherence to scholastic or technical methods; too much personal ambition; too frequent a handling of topics that lie aside from the matters which men and women and youth and children around us are really thinking of and longing for light upon; too much straining away from the simplicity that is in Christ; too controlling a preference for themes and treatments of them which interest rather the speculative habits of the student than the common heart with its working hands; and, especially, a feverish intrusion of discussions which at best have a character mixed between the things of Cæsar and of God, apt to be all the more absorbing because they are infused with the passion of both polemical and political agitation, and which are gradually prompting so many thoughtful and reverential minds to inquire for a church where the week-time shall be consecrated but not exasperated by the Sabbath, and where, so long as Cæsar has six days, God may be sure of one, — these are surely tendencies which must be reckoned in, when we are accounting for the desolations of Zion.

Here, too, as well as anywhere, may be men-

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tioned the prevailing decline in the value set by men on all those acts and ordinances of a reverent piety which Scripture sanctions, a venerable usage recommends, and ecclesiastical authority enjoins. There is nothing very strange in men's neglect to lay out either time or property for holy observances, if they are taught, as systematically as they are taught anything, that the observances are neither holy nor very useful. New England rationalism has logically come to that, and is coming to it more and more openly. There are congregations here, claiming to be Christian, which are regularly told that even the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a superstition, to be administered, if at all, only in tenderness towards an amiable but pitiable sentiment clinging to superstitious people. There are pulpits, claiming to be evangelical, which discard the sacramental and covenant character of Baptism, and successfully encourage parents to disuse or postpone it, till the administration becomes rather the exception than the rule. There are preachers, not a few, who, from following a system which has torn itself away from the simple and primitive creed of Gospel-facts, and discontinued the recognition of those facts in the reverential round of yearly celebrations, have gone on to deny the reality of our Divine Redeemer's miracles, from his supernatural conception to his resurrection and ascension, on the one hand, or to hide from view the blessed truth of his dear humanity on the

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other, till the comprehensive doctrines of his Incarnation have been narrowed down either to a dogmatism without love, or else to ethics without faith. It does so happen, to be sure, that the bill of divorcement between the inward and the outward facts of faith has never been so completely enacted and engrossed, in any denomination of people that preserve a public religion at all, as to quite expunge every trace of a devout ritual. But where the established policy is to reduce it to a minimum; where all the common-sense analogies between institutions of religion and every other institution in the world are scorned; where, in the violence of reaction from making them tests of personal salvation, Sabbath, sanctuary, and all sacred rites, degenerate into suspicious relics of an unscientific and outgrown past,—who can wonder that it should require no very urgent occasion, whether of climate or distance, the arrival of a new book or an old friend, to make *Her* sit solitary and forsaken, with mourning ways and desolate gates and sighing priests "that was full of people." Or who can wonder, when this disorderly spirit seats itself within the very courts which travesty the noble and stately decencies of the Lord's appointing, if finer and more venerating souls, finding the parody too painful, turn away altogether and wait for something better and more Bible-like to come?

Indeed, may we not confidently set down, as among the special reasons for renewed missionary

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zeal in the Church at home, this extensive and palpable *decay of the spirit of reverence*, — in manners and in education, as well as in the things of religion? Not very long ago, I was worshipping the Almighty with a congregation of one of the soberest and most believing of the religious sects around us. Of the minister's part in the exercises it would be an indecorum in me, under the circumstances, to speak, nor could anything truly be said save with entire respect. But the open aspect of a public assembly, anywhere, is a fit subject for public remark. When the prayer was offered, I have no reason to believe that a single human body in the house changed its posture, that one knee was bent, or one head bowed, or even that the eyes of the people were generally shut. Close behind me was a pew occupied by young persons, and of the more reverential sex, who kept up through the services a strain of levity so noisy that I could not follow the speaker till I had personally importuned them to be still. Almost directly in front of me was a family, which, from its position and appearance, must have been one of the foremost in the village, including persons of various ages. Whispering and by-play were incessant from the invocation to the benediction. The only relief to the monotony of vacant and vulgar insensibility, which seemed to brood over the congregation, was when the whole assembly sprang to their feet, and turned their backs upon the minister and pulpit, to listen to a brisk

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piece of singing at the other end of the building. It is unlikely that among the rude rituals of Pagan adoration, ancient or modern, there is one to be found where there is not a more manifest veneration for the object worshipped than in many of these Christian meeting-houses. If there is any natural sentiment that Christianity adopts, calls to its support, and cherishes, it is reverence for what is above us. I submit to you, my friends, whether there is not such a disinclination or contempt of that feeling, on every side of us, as to threaten all visible systems of faith with failure.

Notice, farther, the general absence of those aids and instrumentalities of interest which do something to gain and hold the attention of unreligious persons, so that the Gospel delivered may have a chance at their hearts. Such are a congregational and responsive worship, dignified and graceful accessories, those subdued and chaste helps of Christian art which at once engage the eye and the ear without alluring either of them from the one great Light and Voice. If there is a defensible theory, such as Henry Melville, in one of his sermons, ventures to propound, that the more the faith of Christ recommends itself to men of the world by the manner in which its great doctrines are clothed before them, the less likelihood there is of its being a benefit, while the more it disgusts them the better, — then we ought, to be sure, to applaud and admire the unlovely baldness and nakedness of these popu-

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lar forms of religious exhibition. "It would be all in favor of the habit of a great deal of repetition in preaching," says Mr. Melville in this extraordinary argument, "that it would be altogether distasteful to the hearers; for there is something in the nature of Scriptural truth which is sure to excite prejudice; and if, therefore, prejudice fasten on the mode in which this truth is exhibited, there is likelihood that, being divided or diverted, it will be less intense against truth itself." "We have great confidence," he soberly adds, "of what would be the result, if the experiment could be fairly worked out."* It appears, on the contrary, to have been the Apostle Paul's conviction that while we ought ever to make "Christ and Him crucified" the sum and substance of the message to be preached, all around the preaching, in noble and gracious and comely coöperation, should be grouped the winning adaptations and conciliatory manners that rendered this right-hearted and straight-forward missionary "all things to all men," by all means to "save some." As another English preacher of our day has said, "The world is not yet so much in love with truth and goodness that we can dispense with their natural attractions, or afford to present them in their meanest garb."

This disadvantage, however, accruing to the general administration of Christian truth from the

* Sermon on "By Little and Little," in "British Eloquence, — Sacred Oratory."

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dryness and rigidity of its countenance and bearing, is most mournfully seen in its effect on the young. If the idea of training up children into a Christian maturity be not wholly foreign to the blessed Gospel of our Lord, — if our baptized offspring have any place with us in the family-festival of our Christian hope and privilege, — then they are pitiably wronged by the policy which practically tells them they are aliens from the covenant, and have no share either in its duties or its joys; no motherly arms of a church about them in their temptation; no genial sympathies in their sorrow; no simple creed and liturgy for their lips as well as for the lips of the older sinners around them; no sign of adoration and visible dignity in attitude and vestment; no holy imagery of the Christian year to fasten the facts of redemption in their hearts. Can it surprise anybody, that, when all these gracious auxiliaries are lacking, children turn their happy faces from the grim mask which has been forced upon the religion of the Lord and lover of them all, preferring to have just as little to do with it as fear and constraint will allow?

I suppose it will hardly be denied, that a further vantage-ground to the spiritual power of the Gospel would be given, where vexatious methods of democratic ecclesiastical discipline, intrusive supervision and prejudiced judgments by one's neighbors, a tyranny of *ex parte* decisions, committees of examination upon character, exclusive and arbitrary tests

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of admission to the Lord's table, and consequent irritations, heart-burnings, and damage of orthodox belief, should be superseded by a uniform, considerate, and regulated direction of all discipline, sanctified by the pastor's prayers, and chastened by his affection for the flock. Most men, in Protestant countries, have a strong disrelish for arbitrary and capricious legislation. Just as little are they satisfied to submit themselves to a court of ecclesiastical inquiry and judgment where the sacred things of a private religious experience are exposed with all the publicity of a town-meeting; where the jealousies and envyings of social life, between neighbors and rivals, are permitted to intermix their influence with a real concern for ecclesiastical purity, and where each individual's standing in the body of Christ is dependent on so unjust and impeachable a decision as that of a majority-vote of one's fellow-tradesmen, or customers, or operatives, or the hereditary enemies of his family. Justice, to say nothing of charity, has but a slender chance of vindication, where gossipping passions sit on the bench side by side with the nobler attributes of human nature, and where penalties as dreadful as those of any civil tribunal are imposed, without its oaths and responsibilities. There is scarcely a village in New England where some earnest disciple has not gone away, doubting and disturbed, from the doors of the sanctuary, — not excommunicated, perhaps, for disorderly living, but saddened by disorderly governing.

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But whether disaffection or excommunication itself for heresy to some metaphysical and unscriptural test of orthodoxy be the cause of the separation, what is the result? This earnest but alienated disciple, who needed patient instruction and Christ-like sympathy more than rigid coercion, countenanced by a few friends, becomes the nucleus of a new and more heretical "Society." Around that nucleus gather all the materials of disaffection and victims of wounded pride in the place, — grudges long concealed and waiting for a chance of retaliation, constitutional malcontents, men that have lost caste by pursuing a doubtful business, the *debris* of unsuccessful "movements," crooked sticks that refuse to be bound into any bundle, ambitious "seekers," champions of "natural laws" and the "constitution of man," come-outers, expectants of a "Church of the Future," women soured by non-appreciation in the world of fashion or letters, persons that hope a great deal from "muscular Christianity," misanthropic philanthropists, and others who are half-unconsciously more anxious to see the existing religious organizations go down than to see any religious organization at all succeeding, — all these borrowing respectability and pretext from the few really Christian souls, above referred to, who were estranged from the orthodox fold by a mistaken treatment and an unfortunate discipline. In describing them I do not mean to condemn them, or even to condemn the advocates

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of the faulty religious policy which has banded them together and strengthened their hands. They are all souls for which Christ died. He and His apostles met such in their own gracious ministry, and while they plainly exposed their errors, they dealt with them in a wise and wonderful affection. What we are interested in here is such a survey of the facts of our own domestic history, and faults existing around us, as to see how disorders have crept in, how the Gospel has been shorn of its jewels, and how, in a Church which avoids and remedies these errors, we are put under a solemn responsibility to arise with our whole heart and mind to do our Master's work. Our territory is defaced by shapes of unbelief which need never have been born if this Church, with her evangelical and positive preaching, liberal terms of communion, orderly ways, genial temper, and benevolent discipline, had been on the ground. Sectarian disputes and disagreements are daily estranging many strong minds from the Saviour's flock. O, my fellow-believers, there is a truth to awaken and alarm us in these simple words: "If our vehement controversialists would but see it, the real peril of the time is, not that people should prefer one religious school to another, but that they should lose faith in any religion at all."

We turn from these necessary but not agreeable comparisons of systems to a cause of the prevalent negligence of Christian institutions which, to a

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great degree, is common to our own with other bodies of Christians, viz., the financial economy of parishes.

The difficulty here is twofold: while there never was a community where the instinct of the money interest and money distinction was more active, it is yet a community where the feebleness of the religious principle needs to be specially protected from that passion. It is probable that three times as many people in this State are kept regularly absent from public worship by considerations that are directly or indirectly pecuniary, — *i. e.*, by the cost of going, or by the pride and ambition of appearances, as are found in all the Episcopal parishes together. Not that they are thus held back, being very anxious to go, but that, being indifferent, this is the preponderating consideration that turns the scale. Remember that, in cities and larger towns, the natural reluctance to meet the pew-rent or the purchase, especially with people coming in from other places, has to be added to all the other impediments that stand in the way, — as the making up of the mind where to apply, the difficulty of finding the proper parochial officer, the strange and chilly aspect of a new spot and new faces, the idea of being an object of unfriendly observation, — all consummated at last, and made fatal, in the burdensome tax. Remember, too, the odium and the jealousy which attend the distribution of a congregation through the house by the rule of pecuniary ability,

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thus turning the Lord's Temple itself — with the Gospel of rich and poor alike, including the second chapter of St. James's Epistle, lying open in front — into a public index for marking off social distinctions and gradations. Be generous enough to give the poor a pew here and there in the midst of the finer people, and the contrast in dress still mortifies them. Pack them away in a pauper's corner or gallery, and just in proportion as the infirmity of pride is in them they inwardly protest. Till some system of parish support is adopted which, in better measure, obviates these difficulties and makes a nearer approach to brotherly equality; till there is, perhaps, some happy combination, suited to our New England habits of mind, of individual and family rights with easy payments, and voluntary offerings to make up deficiencies; and above all, till the whole doctrine of human ownership and title-deeds in church property — first consecrating and giving up the edifice to God, and then selling it out to bidders according to their carnal wealth — is religiously abandoned, these embarrassments *must* no doubt continue, and Christian people must try to overcome them and mitigate them, and keep the blessed Word of the Gospel sounding forth in spite of them. One thing is clear: whatever religious form or body shall first have the courage, clear-sightedness and faith to break away from these bandages, and return towards the simplicity and liberty of the primitive and catholic customs, will

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gather an unprecedented vintage of souls for the Great Planter and Dresser of the vineyard. It will also greatly aid in the propagation and extending of the faith, if the new parishes are willing, for the time, — setting more by their spiritual store and privilege than by a handsome structure, — to refrain from much begging, and to go on growing healthfully and normally from within, adding to their outward accommodations as the Lord prospers them, by the tenth of all their increase; knit together by their sacrifices and mutual love; holding fast their independence and self-respect, and so stablished and settled, — each station multiplying its own vigor and stability by working out into the surrounding region, — and so every little freshly-planted Thessalonica sounding out and spreading abroad its faith to Godward, through all its Macedonia and Achaia.

Allowance must also be made, without doubt, for the prejudice against Christian institutions, arising from their apparent unconcern about the immediate interests of humanity. The world at large is either impatient or suspicious of a religious profession which creates so violent a separation between men in this world and men in the next, as to leave the welfare of the former entirely in abeyance. There is a strong instinct, on all sides, that the Church of Christ ought to behave herself towards every kind of human suffering, sorrow, oppression, and privation, very much as Christ himself in

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the flesh behaved. One Scriptural demand the most worldly people are sharp-sighted and prompt to insist on: "Show us thy faith by works." Is it unreasonable? Who shall lead, in all the enterprises of genuine mercy and beneficence, if not the followers of the sacrificed Healer of men's miseries, who made sympathy and self-denial the foremost virtues in a true disciple? If the Church gives men reason to think she exists only for the sake of keeping up her routine of ceremonial performance and wearing the badges of a peculiar order, they will say in their hearts either that the Church is the victim of a weak and sentimental delusion, or else that she is a self-seeking, conceited, and arrogant Pharisee; and they will act accordingly. We may complain of them for requiring these noble and beautiful fruits of our piety; we may think they lay a disproportionate stress on the Epistles of St. James and St. John. But we cannot help it. As long as these epistles are there in the Bible, and as long as it is perfectly plain that they are charged with the very spirit of the Lord and Master of us all, would it not be well to set more earnestly about taking this reproach out of the mouths of our neighbors, by loving more heartily and practically the brother whom we have seen? When the Church is seen to have it for her joyful and constant work to invent and establish and carry forward every form of charitable activity in the community, every species of agency of relief and

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encouragement for infirm bodies and fainting souls; when she seeks out, as by a holy passion for well-doing, every wretched creature, every forlorn family, every neglected district or disabled class within her borders, and carries out light and warmth and food and raiment and cheerfulness and hope, in both of her strong and beautiful hands, is it not probable that a larger number of souls will gather into her Sanctuaries, join her upon her knees, hearken to her message, and, seeing her good works, glorify God?

Thus the harvest-field of the Diocese lies before us, with some of the causes that make it great and white, while the laborers are few. I frankly say that it has been an irksome part of my duty here, as it always is distasteful, to dwell at all on the short-comings and failures in the operation of Christian agencies hitherto, and to compare with our own other religious systems, which have been put upon experiment in sincerity, have witnessed the working of much pure zeal for the Saviour's name, have been sometimes a pattern of missionary devotedness, and sometimes a rebuke, by contrast, to ourselves, and which can still show the honorable fruits of many disinterested and holy souls, to be numbered doubtless with God's saints in glory everlasting. But each one of us, I suppose, must bring, when he is called upon, such offerings of testimony and observation as the Providence of his past life has put into his hands, laying them down,

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in a spirit of brotherly kindness and charity towards every individual Christian of any name in the world, as his own little contribution towards the solution of the great problem which presses upon us all, towards the furtherance of that mighty work with which the whole Church is put in trust, and towards the recovery of the lost sheep upon the mountains. Indeed, why, otherwise, are we met here to-night? We are met in behalf of missions in Massachusetts. But Massachusetts is not heathen ground. For more than two centuries the glorious tidings of man's salvation have had an unobstructed sweep across this territory from east to west, — a territory seized from the wildness of nature for this very end, and by hands that were ready to bleed or be burnt with fagot-fires, for Him whose hands were pierced on the Cross. How does it happen that we are here, now, pleading for unconverted thousands within all our borders, lost and not yet found, — dead children of an ancestry that were alive? Either the call is superfluous, and the occasion is a mistake, or else we have patiently and sadly to seek the causes that have brought these patches of the wilderness back upon the tilled field. Purposely and carefully, my dear friends, I have endeavored so to shape each statement of the reasons and explanations of our grievous necessity, as to convey in the very statement an argument for the supply, — without offence to anybody that is in earnest around us, and without

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boasting of what is within, — for God knows how little there is to make material for that, and how self-confidence will only cripple more hopelessly the languid limbs. The ruling thought all along has been, that to bring multitudes — multitudes all around and close by us — into the valley of Christian Decision, and to the foot of the Cross, making a new "Day of the Lord," we here, and those we represent, have only to *give freely* what by the favor of Christ we have *freely received;* and it is a thought all alive with practical power. As for much the greater number of the occasions of backsliding, weakness, and confusion, which have been mentioned, — especially the errors of administration, worship, and discipline, the lack of reverence, the estrangement of the young, and the underrating of outward order, — it is plain enough that some peculiar powers and methods of remedy have been lodged in our keeping.

What these are is well known to you who hear me. They may easily be known to all that would learn; for they are openly shown in our Book of Common Prayer and in the public polity of our Church. We offer both to the world as a consistent exposition of our faith; as a cure for the evils we have reviewed; and as a boon of unspeakable grace and comfort to the people of this land and to their children. If we know ourselves, we are not seeking either proselytes or patrons for this Church; for, confident of the final fulfilment of the Saviour's

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promise, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," and resting firmly on the Rock of Ages, she is neither eager for proselytes nor anxious for supporters. But as she is our wise and venerable and gracious Mother, whether by our birth or adoption, we do long, in every energy and sympathy of our souls, for our brethren and companions' sakes, that they should gather and be at rest, — should be at that work which is joyous rest, — under her benignant face and within her mighty arms. After a dreary night on the wild and bitter moorland, stumbling over uneven ground, unsheltered from the frosty sky, following voices of uncertain sound contradicting one another, who shall forbid the grateful pilgrim to give thanks, or to yearn for the souls of those he loves who are left behind, when he comes to the House Beautiful, venerable and steadfast and lofty, full of light and warmth and freedom and melody, with bread from heaven enough and to spare, with the treasures of the great King spread through all the fair place, and His praises resounding in its holy courts?

Come, you who are seeking, and see. Are you seeking an affirmative, Biblical, plain, and evangelical Creed? This Church holds it out to you, as the centre and heart of her whole system, — a creed having Christ crucified for its substance, and His reconciling blood for its seal; in language so simple that her little children can understand it;

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subject to no variation by human councils and caprices; repeating it daily through the ages by the lips of all her multitudes of believers. Are you inquiring after broad and permanent terms of admission to the privileges of the Holy Sacraments? You find them fixed in the same catholic creed, subject to no local or individual restriction or expansion, surrounded only by simple, significant, and attractive ceremonials, — every point of which has a meaning that you will learn whenever you will attend to it with patience and docility. Are you solicitous that the form of confession should be definitely Protestant? Turn to her Articles, and, in perfect harmony with all her standards, they set her clear from every compromise or complicity with Papal error; sounding forth the faith by which Christ justifies, in the definitions of those brave and clear-sighted reformers who have furnished to modern Christendom its great armory of defences, reaffirming the declarations and symbols of the first fathers. Do you desire a reverential worship that kindles and elevates into pure and exalted frames every spiritual faculty, while it never offends the taste or jars upon the serenity of the adoring heart? Take up our prayers and praises; join audibly in them; feel your sympathies glow and go out with the uplifted voices of the great congregation around you; hear the intercessions and supplications and ascriptions flow on, without shock, or surprise, or interruption from

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any human effort at ingenuity or eloquence, or from criticism at any human hesitation or blunder, with a fervor and grandeur which carry every needy and worshipping spirit on towards the gate of heaven and to the foot of the mercy-seat, in penitence, entreaty, and thanksgiving. Do you feel the need of every possible outward assistance to render your exercises of confession and adoration thus complete? You have them here in silence and solemnity through all the place; in appropriate accessories operating through the senses and the heart; in postures of the body variously adapted to all the varying parts of the service; the same in all parts of the world where this Church exists, — familiar from childhood, impressive to almost every human being. Do you love the Scriptures? They are read and returned to, in all their portions; their wonderful connections and relations are brought out and displayed together in the lessons of every Sunday; they are woven like threads of gold into the woof of chant, of collect, and versicle; they are the vernacular language and household conversation of the Sanctuary. Would you be governed in things spiritual by a high and impartial judicature? Examine our legislation, polity, and modes of discipline, and say wherein the government could be more considerate, guarded, delicate, or more firm and uniform; less liable to interference, friction, or fluctuation; less aggravating to the offender, less oppressive to the weakest, less hurtful to the inno-

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cent; or in more admirable conformity than it is with the Constitution of our country and the modes of our civil administration, in the adjustment of coördinate powers, the representative principle, and the balance of liberty with law. Would you be taught and ruled by a body of clergy whose intelligence and authority you can respect? Study our qualifications for ordination, our apostolical commission and succession, our primitive rule of orders, — not changed or to be changed, — and if you are apt to be impressed with majorities, or ever wonder that we do not bend our regulations to the customs of excellent ministers standing outside of us, observe that the threefold Episcopal Ministry, while condemning nobody, abides in the consciousness that it has stood the trial of more than eighteen hundred years, was unchallenged for fifteen hundred, has the history of the Christian world for its attestation, and occupies four-fifths of that Christian world to-day. Do you prefer preaching that adheres closely to the scriptural message, searches the personal conscience, exhorts men to repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus, and beseeches them to be reconciled to Him, avoiding all topics foreign to this evangelical vocation? Whether for reproach or for commendation, that is the acknowledged distinction of the pulpit of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Does your spirit hunger for a real covenant in Baptism, and a veritable sacrament in the bread and wine of the Lord's

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Supper, — for ordinances which really are what they seem, and are not emptied of their meaning and rhetorically explained away into optional rites, for a false spiritualism to set aside at its conceited will? Ponder the offices for the administration of these sacraments in our Prayer Book, and enter into the lowliness of mind, the meek dependence, the "due reverence," and the humble confessions which are breathed there.

Besides this, if you continue your investigations, you discover that this Church-system is in all respects both comprehensive in its range of sympathies and singularly perfect in its adaptations to what may be called the philosophy of the spiritual life. The type of Christian character which it legitimately produces is marked by a certain naturalness and healthiness, free from cant and sentimentalism. In man it is manly; in woman it is womanly; and in children it is childlike. The annual observances and the chastened symbolism so give body and shape and color to the glorious Gospel-truths that they are wrought into the convictions and belief of the people; become a cheerful element in their daily life; and are invested with a thousand tender and happy associations from their childhood up. Indeed, our Church especially endears herself to children, because she loves them, engages their interest, infuses her spirit and doctrine into their hearts, delights them with her anniversaries, trains their veneration and loyalty, and makes

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them comprehend that they are her cherished members. While insisting on actual conversion, and a deliberate choice and self-consecration, as conditions of Confirmation and Communion, the system also presents itself as a school for the training and maturing of its members in all holy conversation and godliness, sanctifying family life, and building up all the character in the holy likeness of the Lord. Thus, in its entire operation, it is a peculiarly practical system. Exempt as it is from liability to any essential alterations, it yet admits great variety of religious action and enterprise; it suits itself equally to all classes of people, as it is impartial in its privileges; it is a Church preëminent in fitness for organized, systematic work, in all manner of missions; it is the Church of charity as of faith; its genius is to give a task for Christ to every member of His flock; it checks the tendencies to wild individualism in both thought and manners which are so rife in our times. By all these traits and means, it opens a blessed Home for all souls for which the Saviour died.

For one, I believe, with all my heart, that if some coming breath of the Pentecostal Spirit could only so stir our souls, and sweep aside the mists, and if the bright Pentecostal flames could so reveal the realities amidst which we stand, and so fire our zeal, that all of us, who have a common faith and offer common prayer, should actually *see what it is given us to do*, this encroaching barrenness of the

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land about us would unroll surfaces of living green and golden grain, and every wasted patch would bud and blossom as the rose.

Come, then, O breath; awake, O thou north wind, and sound out the Word of the Lord; and blow, thou south wind, upon the valley and the blasted garden, till the dry bones live, and the desert blooms!

And now, having said so much, how gladly must we all turn and stand together on that table-land of the Thessalonian faith and hope and charity, having the good old heritage of holy inspiration and Providential history behind us, the open "field which is the world" before us, and Christ Almighty to save, within and over us; for our motive, His love constraining us; for our prize, perishing souls; and for our exceeding great reward, His own brighter glory, His "well done" to us, and the sound of praises from many once profane but redeemed lips. "For we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh, and rejoice in Christ Jesus." For our present home, we have — some of us by a happy birthright and inheritance, some of us by a slow and suffering pilgrimage — that visible kingdom which forms so much of the subject of this Epistle to the Thessalonians: a kingdom, now as then, both expectant and militant, — expectant of the glory soon to be revealed, and militant only against the darkness of this world, but *never against itself*.

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Three things we want, to act by: these three, the spirit of faith, the spirit of unity, the spirit of sacrifice; — faith in Christ alone, sacrifice for His dear sake; the unity for which He longed and prayed; — and all these by "the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, so that the comfortable Gospel of Christ may be truly preached, truly received, and truly followed in all places, to the breaking down the kingdom of sin, Satan, and death, till at length the whole of the dispersed sheep, being gathered into one fold, shall become partakers of everlasting life." How sweetly, over the suspicions and strifes which sometimes creep in upon us while we wait yet in these mortal tabernacles, come the beautiful, catholic words of a saintly and venerable father of one of the Reformed Churches in this country:* "I do not belong, exactly, to either of the schools. There are many things about the old school that I like, and I am of opinion that it is none the worse for being old. There are some things about the new school that I do not greatly object to. I suspect, after all, that both schools have the same Master, though in each some things are learned which the Master does not teach. I think the scholars of both schools ought to love one another. Oh, I wish they would! I desire it for charity's sake; I desire it for truth's sake; for the way to think alike is first to feel alike." "That they all, O Father, might be one!"

*Nevins.

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Only let us remember that for the extension of this kingdom, here as everywhere, sacrifices are the price, — costly sacrifices; sacrifices of ease, of money, of bodily comfort, of self-indulgence, and self-will. Shall we complain or shrink back at that? Behold, the "new and living way" that led us to it was the "blood of Jesus"; and He "who *suffered* for us in the flesh" is the only Door!

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